



**State of Wisconsin
Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Division of Food Safety**

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FACT SHEET FOR FOOD PROCESSORS

Aerobic Plate Count

Background

The Aerobic Plate Count (APC) is used as an indicator of the level of bacteria in a food product.

The APC does not measure the entire bacterial population, but rather the number of bacteria that grow in the presence of oxygen (aerobically) and at medium range (mesophilic) temperatures.

Raw agricultural commodities may have widely fluctuating Aerobic Plate Counts.

Significance

The APC can be used evaluate the sanitary condition of a food product or equipment.

If performed during processing, the APC can be used to monitor buildup of residues on equipment.

If performed after sanitation, it can be used to gauge the effectiveness of the cleanup process.

The APC does not determine the presence of human pathogens.

A high APC may be an indication of poor sanitation or of problems with process control or ingredients.

A low APC, however, is not a guarantee that the sample is free of pathogens.

Prevention

Proper sanitation and post-processing procedures.

Use of high quality raw ingredients in food products.